

Helpful Hints for Developing Healthy Eating Habits

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Although there are many different views concerning diet and nutrition, there is agreement that total physical and emotional health is very much influenced by our diets and eating habits. Nutritionists also generally agree with the following recommendations of the U.S. Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs.

Helpful Strategies -

- Increase consumption of fruits and vegetables and whole grains.
- Decrease consumption of refined and other processed sugars and foods high in such sugars.
- Experts agree that no more than 30 percent of total calories should come from fat. Decrease consumption of foods high in total fat, and partially replace saturated fats, whether obtained from animal or vegetable sources, with monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats.
- Decrease consumption of animal fat, and choose meats, poultry and fish that are low in fat.
- Except for young children, substitute low-fat and nonfat milk for whole milk, and low-fat dairy products for high-fat dairy products.
- Decrease consumption of butterfat, eggs, and other high cholesterol sources. Some consideration should be given to easing the cholesterol goal for pre-menopausal women, young children, and the elderly in order to obtain the nutritional benefits of eggs in the diet.
- Decrease consumption of salt and foods high in salt content.

Additional Considerations -

- Overeating can be as harmful as insufficient nutrition.
- Obesity, in addition to causing physical problems, has implications for mental and emotional health — e.g., response to emotional tension, substitute gratification in intolerable situations, specific symptoms of emotional illness such as depression or a type of addiction, etc.
- Compulsive eating — the binger (stress), the unsatisfied eater (unfulfilled), the night eater (insomnia) are eating habits detrimental to health.
- Distribution of food intake is important and should be adapted to one's lifestyle and schedule. Usually it is best to eat a large or moderate breakfast that contains a good mixture of protein and carbohydrates. For lunch, you should eat a proper meal — not just a snack — and for dinner, a relatively light, easily digested meal.
- Many people eat food quickly without really tasting it. Savoring the food by chewing it slowly rather than shoveling, gulping, and gorging not only adds to the enjoyment, but also is healthier.
- Expand your eating time. Whenever possible, eat in a relaxed atmosphere or environment. The fast food phenomenon of our day is physically and psychologically detrimental if one eats this way habitually.
- Many people eat on the run and at irregular times. It is best to have regular meal times, moderate amounts of food, and companions to share conversation.